

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GOC STATEMENTS ON TRADE UNION RIGHTS

1. SUMMARY. THREE RECENT STATEMENTS BY SENIOR GOC OFFICIALS HAVE SOUGHT TO CALM "UNEASINESS" AMONG TRADE UNION LEADERS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF GOVT LABOR POLICY. PRINCIPAL THEME IS THAT BASIC GOVT DECISIONS IN THIS AREA WILL BE MADE WITH FULL PARTICIPATION

AND CONSULTATION OF WORKERS AND UNION LEADERS WHO ARE DIRECTLY AFFECTED. GOVT ATTENTION TO LABOR AREA MAY REFLECT CURRENT GOC CONCERN WITH POSSIBLE ITF BOYCOTT AND ILO INVESTIGATING COMMISSION AND COULD FORESHADOW SOME RELAXATION IN TIGHT GOVT CONTROL OF LABOR ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. MIN LABOR DIAZ STATEMENT, PRINTED IN SANTIAGO PRESS AUG 8, TOOK NOTE OF "UNEASINESS" (INQUIETUD) AMONG TRADE UNION LEADERS CONCERNING GOVT PLANS TO REVAMP SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM AND TO INSTITUTE REFORMS IN TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION (I.E. POSSIBLY PERMISSION TO HOLD ELECTIONS). ACTING ON "SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION OF JUNTA PRESIDENT," DIAZ MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. GOVT HAS MADE NO FIRM DECISION YET ON WHAT CHANGES TO MAKE IN SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, OR IN TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION.

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B. BOTH TOPICS ARE INDEED UNDER STUDY, BASED ON GOALS OF

ACHIEVING "MAXIMUM USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR BENEFIT OF WORKERS, AND OF THEIR FREE REPRESENTATIVE, AND EXPEDITIOUS ORGANIZATION."

C. "GOVT DESIRE IS UNRESTRICTED RESPECT FOR ACQUIRED RIGHTS AND LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS OF THE WORKERS, BOTH IN THESE AREAS, AND IN ANY OTHER."

D. ONCE TECHNICAL STUDIES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED "GOVT WILL, BEFORE ADOPTING SPECIFIC ACTIONS, LISTEN TO THE OPINION OF THE TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS."

3. COINCIDENTAL WITH LABOR MINISTER STATEMENT, MEETING OF ALL 25 GOVT PROVINCIAL LABOR COORDINATORS BEGAN AUG 7 IN SANTIAGO. GOAL OF MEETING, ACCORDING TO MIN LABOR SPOKESMAN, IS TO "COORDINATE" WORK OF THESE OFFICES AND AVOID DUPLICATION WITH OTHER GOVT ENTITIES INVOLVED IN LABOR RELATIONS. NEW DIR OF LABOR ALVARO PIZARRO STATED THAT "UNEASINESS" AMONG LABOR LEADERS THAT THEY WILL NOT BE CONSULTED ON GOVT LABOR POLICY IS UNFOUNDED. OUR GOAL, HE SAID, IS TO HAVE FULL PARTICIPATION OF LABOR SECTOR IN DECISIONS WHICH AFFECT THEM RATHER THAN HAVE DECISIONS HANDED DOWN FROM DIEGO PORTALES BUILDING (SEAT OF GOVT).

4. JUNTA MEMBER AND AIR FORCE CINC GEN GUSTAVO LEIGH, ON VISIT TO PUNTA ARENAS IN EXTREME SOUTH, REPORTEDLY TOLD SOME 600 PETROLEUM WORKERS THAT WORKERS RIGHTS, INCLUDING RIGHT TO STRIKE, WILL BE RESPECTED. LEIGH ALSO STRESSED NEED FOR MODERNIZATION OF LABOR CODE, THOROUGH REFORM OF SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, AND GOVT INTENTION TO ESTABLISH "DIALOGUE" WITH WORKERS TO "HARMONIZE" INTERESTS OF LABOR, CAPITAL, AND GOVT, OUT OF WHICH "I AM SURE THERE WILL BE AGREEMENT." LEIGH CLAIMED MUCH DISCUSSED "SOCIAL STATUTE OF THE BUSINESS ENTERPRISE" IN WHICH WORKER PARTICIPATION WILL BE MAJOR THEME IS "READY TO BE ISSUED." (INTERIOR MINISTER TOLD AMBASSADOR EARLIER IN WEEK "SOCIAL STATUTE" WILL PROVIDE FOR LABOR "CO-DECISION.")

5. COMMENT. AFTER RELATIVELY LONG HIATUS OF GOVERNMENT PRONOUNCEMENTS ON TRADE UNION SITUATION, SPATE OF RECENT ATTENTION MAY BE SIGNIFICANT AND MAY FORESHADOW SOME GOVT RELAXATION OF PRESENT TIGHT CONTROL OVER LABOR ACTIVITIES. RELATIONSHIP OF THESE STATEMENTS TO POSSIBLE ITF BOYCOTT OF CHILE AND PLANNED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARRIVAL IN OCTOBER OF ILO TEAM TO INVESTIGATE TRADE UNION SITUATION CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED. IN ANY EVENT, SEEMS APPARENT THAT "UNEASINESS" OF TRADE UNION LEADERS IS NOW MAKING SUFFICIENT IMPACT ON TOP GOC OFFICIALS THAT THEY FEEL COMPELLED AT LEAST TO ISSUE WORDS OF REASSURANCE.

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